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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4956
INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 000328

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR CA/OCS/ACS, NEA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/10/2018

TAGS: LE PREF PREL SY CASC

SUBJECT: SARG SAYS IT WILL ALLOW AMCITS TO ENTER FROM LEBANON

REF: (A) CORBIN-OPS CTR TELCON 5/10/08 (B) STATE 49822

Classified By: CDA Michael H. Corbin for reasons 1.5 b/d

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Confirming a May 10 phone conversation (reported REF A), MFA Chief of Protocol told CDA in person May 11 that the SARG would, for humanitarian reasons, allow entry of U.S. citizens (both non-official and official) without the usual visa entry requirement (REF B). Dabbagh stated that Saudi, Australian, Canadian and other diplomats were seeking evacuation from Lebanon through Syria. End summary.

¶2. (C) MFA Chief of Protocol Abdul Latif Dabbagh convoked CDA May 11 to inform him of the SARG's official response to the Ref B demarche CDA had made the previous day, to which Dabbagh had responded he would personally order border posts to facilitate the entry of Amcits. Dabbagh said when he had raised the U.S. demarche with FM Mualllem, Mualllem had agreed with the need to provide humanitarian assistance and allow Americans to enter Syria from Lebanon. In fact, Dabbagh reported, when Dabbagh had proposed transit visas for Amcits, Mualllem had insisted that Dabbagh allow Americans to stay if need be. Dabbagh said he had been in touch with the Director of Immigration to ensure the order was implemented and said that border personnel would be provided instructions to issue transit visas. Dabbagh did not ask for any guarantees or information from the U.S. on those entering.

¶3. (C) Dabbagh said that he had spent the weekend working with other Embassies seeking assistance for their diplomats and citizens seeking to enter Syria from Lebanon. These included Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Australia, Canada, and the Philippines. Dabbagh said he had facilitated a "plane-load of Saudi diplomats the previous night." Dabbagh said he had not received any calls regarding Amcits to date.

¶4. (SBU) Embassy will continue to work to facilitate the entry of any Amcits seeking to leave Lebanon by way of Syria.
CORBIN